



State of Washington

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N - Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 - (360) 902-2200, TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office location: Natural Resources Building - 1111 Washington Street SE - Olympia, WA

DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)

Name of Proposal: DNS #13-076: CHINOOK ESTUARY RESTORATION PROJECT

Description of Proposal:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is proposing a first phase of restoration to the Chinook River Wildlife Unit along the Chinook River in Pacific County. The primary goal of this phase of work is to expand on previous restoration efforts to recover the natural estuarine and riparian wetland habitats of the Chinook River by restoring historically present tidal flows through the estuary. WDFW is developing this restoration in partnership with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The outcome is a functioning estuary that will provide significant habitat improvements for in-basin (Chinook River) and out-of-basin (Columbia River) anadromous salmonids. Three primary objectives are:

- Benefit the fish and wildlife management objectives of the WDFW Wildlife Area, while protecting adjacent landowners from risk of flooding.
- Directly and indirectly support the restoration of anadromous fish populations of the Chinook River and the Columbia River Basin; with an emphasis on recovery of ESA-listed stocks.
- Provide enhanced fish and wildlife based recreational opportunities to the public.

This project is a fish habitat enhancement project for the recovery of ESA-listed salmonids. The Chinook River estuary historically supported five anadromous salmonid species: steelhead, sea-run cutthroat, Chinook, coho, and chum salmon. Recent monitoring indicates that the abundance of these species in the Chinook River watershed has been significantly reduced from historic levels. The Chinook River estuary also provides important rearing habitat for out-of-basin juvenile salmonids originating from the Columbia River. The loss of habitat and reduction of salmonid populations is attributed primarily to the construction of the Highway 101 overpass and associated tide gate structures in the early 1920's. During this time, wetlands within the Chinook estuary were converted to agricultural fields and pastures. Drainage of these low elevation fields was created incorporating the existing tidal sloughs and the addition of an extensive ditch network. Numerous crossings with culverts have been incorporated into the system over the past century, and many of these crossings and structures have failed, blocking and/or limiting tidal exchange. WDFW has located several crossings over historical tidal sloughs and channels that are crucial for maximization of estuarine and fish habitat. Opening these channels is a simple and effective way of restoring these key ecological processes. These enhancements will occur on WDFW lands (1,051 acres total), including a 201 acre fee title property located to the north of Giles Island on the Chinook River, acquired during 2013.

The specific project elements are:

- 1) Restore and/or excavate 3,300 linear feet corresponding to approximately 3,800 cubic yards (cy) of artificially filled or altered tidal channels;
- 2) Remove by excavation eight (8) relict channel crossings (approximately 900 cy) – these channel crossings currently completely block the channels.

- 3) Use excavated material to enhance floodplain complexity.
- 4) Install three 30" culverts with tide gates under first crossing. Install one 30" culvert under second crossing. Install two 30" culverts with tide gates on third crossing. Build access road up to earthwork spoils site. Work will be completed with excavators, dump trucks and dozers.
- 5) Replant all disturbed areas with native plants and seed.

Proponent/Applicant: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

DONNA BIGHOUSE
2108 GRAND BLVD
VANCOUVER, WA. 98661
360.906.6738
Donna.Bighouse@dfw.wa.gov

Location of Proposal, including street, if any: WDFW's Chinook River Wildlife Unit, approximately 2 miles north of Chinook, Washington, Pacific County; Sections 5, 6, 8, 31, 32, Township 09 North, Range 10 West WM.

Lead Agency: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

WDFW has determined that this proposal will likely not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, state law¹ does not require an environmental impact statement (EIS). WDFW made this determination of nonsignificance (DNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this DNS according to state rules.² We will **not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the DNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or DNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. This means we must receive your comments by **December 2, 2013**

Method of Comment:

The following procedures shall govern the method to comment on agency SEPA proposals. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal.

You can submit your comments any one of the following ways:

- Email to SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946;
- Mail to the address below.

Responsible Official: Bob Zeigler

Position/Title: SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

Address: 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/> Once the status is posted as final, applicants and permittees may take action on the proposal. When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.¹

If you have questions about this DNS or the details of the proposal, contact Bob Zeigler at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call him at (360) 902-2578.

DATE OF ISSUE: November 15, 2013

SIGNATURE: *Bob Zeigler*

Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-340(2).

SEPA Log Number: 13 -076. dns